United Nations E/CN.18/2017/2

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
20 February 2017

Original: English

United Nations Forum on Forests
Twelfth session
New York, 1-5 May 2017
Item 3 of the provisional agenda*

Implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017-2030

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The United Nations Forum on Forests, at its twelfth session, will consider the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017-2030. In particular, the Forum will consider three sub-items: (a) technical discussion and exchange of experiences on the thematic and operational priorities, priority actions and resource needs for the period 2017-2018, taking into account the review cycle of the high-level political forum on sustainable development during the biennium and the theme of the International Day of Forests; (b) voluntary announcement of voluntary national contributions; and (c) United Nations system-wide contributions to the implementation of the global forest goals and targets of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017-2030. The present note has been prepared to facilitate the deliberation by member States of the Forum on the implementation of the strategic plan.

* E/CN.18/2017/1.

17-02627 (E) 030317

Please recycle

I. Introduction

1. In accordance with the quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for the period 2017-2020, the Forum will consider at its twelfth session the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017-2030 as a priority action. This includes consideration of: (a) a technical discussion and exchange of experiences on the thematic and operational priorities, priority actions and resource needs for the period 2017-2018, taking into account the review cycle of the high-level political forum on sustainable development during the biennium and the theme of the International Day of Forests; (b) voluntary announcement of voluntary national contributions; and (c) United Nations system-wide contributions to the implementation of the global forest goals and targets of the strategic plan.

2. The present note has been prepared to serve as the basis for these discussions under agenda item 3 of the twelfth session of the Forum. The note includes a brief description of key features of the strategic plan and provides an overview of possible thematic and operational priorities for the period 2017-2018 for consideration by the Forum at its twelfth session.

II. Background

3. At its eleventh session, the Forum decided to develop a concise strategic plan for the period 2017-2030 which would serve as a strategic framework to enhance the coherence of, and guide and focus the work of, the international arrangement on forests and its components. The Forum also decided to operationalize the strategic plan through quadrennial programmes of work that set out priority actions and resource needs of the Forum, beginning with the period 2017-2020.

4. In accordance with paragraph 48 of Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/33, an open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group was established to develop its proposals on the matters referred to in paragraph 44 of the same resolution, namely: (a) replacement of the reference to the Millennium Development Goals in paragraph 1 (b) of the United Nations forest instrument with an appropriate reference to the Sustainable Development Goals and targets; and (b) the strategic plan for the period 2017-2030 and the quadrennial programme of work for the period 2017-2020, consistent with section XI of resolution 2015/33.

5. In accordance with paragraph 46 of its resolution 2015/33, the Economic and Social Council decided to also establish a working group of the Forum to develop proposals on matters referred to in paragraph 44 of the same resolution. The working group was convened from 16 to 20 January 2017. Taking into account the outcome of the open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group, the working group developed proposals for the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017-2030 and the quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for the period 2017-2020, and recommended them for consideration by the Forum at its special session.

6. In accordance with paragraph 50 of Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/33, the Forum convened a special session immediately following the adjournment of the working group on 20 January 2017. At that session, the Forum adopted the proposed strategic plan and the quadrennial programme of work for the period 2017-2020.

7. At its special session, the Forum recommended the adoption of a draft resolution by the Economic and Social Council, in which the Council would approve the strategic plan and the quadrennial programme of work for the period 2017-2020. In addition, the Forum recommended an amendment of the United

Nations forest instrument, namely the replacement of the reference to the Millennium Development Goals in paragraph 1 (b) of the forest instrument with an appropriate reference to the Sustainable Development Goals and targets.[1]

8. According to the recommendation of the special session of the Forum, the Council, and subsequently the General Assembly, are expected to adopt and approve the strategic plan, as well as the modification to the United Nations forest instrument.

9. The twelfth session of the Forum is the first session since the adoption of the strategic plan and the quadrennial programme of work for the period 2017-2020.

III. Key features of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017-2030

10. The United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017-2030 is a landmark plan of action for forests and provides a global framework for sustainably managing all types of forests and trees outside forests, halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation, and increasing the forest area. This universal action plan for forests encompasses and engages all partners and stakeholders at all levels, and highlights their respective roles and responsibilities in the implementation of the plan.

11. The plan includes a set of the six global forest goals[2] and 26 targets to be achieved by 2030, as well as voluntary national contributions towards their attainment. The global forest goals and targets are integrated and interlinked, and foster enhanced coherence, collaboration and synergies within and beyond the United Nations system.[3]

12. The strategic plan provides a road map to guide forest-related contributions to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, the United Nations forest instrument and other international forest-related instruments, processes, commitments and goals.

---

[1] See E/2017/10-E/CN.18/SS/2017/2.

[2] Global forest goal 1: Reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide through sustainable forest management, including protection, restoration, afforestation and reforestation, and increase efforts to prevent forest degradation and contribute to the global effort of addressing climate change.
Global forest goal 2: Enhance forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits, including by improving the livelihoods of forest-dependent people.
Global forest goal 3: Increase significantly the area of protected forests worldwide and other areas of sustainably managed forests, as well as the proportion of forest products from sustainably managed forests.
Global forest goal 4: Mobilize significantly increased, new and additional financial resources from all sources for the implementation of sustainable forest management and strengthen scientific and technical cooperation and partnerships.
Global forest goal 5: Promote governance frameworks to implement sustainable forest management, including through the United Nations forest instrument, and enhance the contribution of forests to the 2030 Agenda.
Global forest goal 6: Enhance cooperation, coordination, coherence and synergies on forest-related issues at all levels, including within the United Nations system and among member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, as well as among sectors and relevant stakeholders.

[3] For a complete list of the 26 targets associated with the six global forest goals, see E/2017/10-E/CN.18/SS/2017/2.

13. The strategic plan is aimed at stimulating and catalysing ambitious and transformational actions by all actors at all levels to achieve its mission of promoting sustainable forest management and the contribution of forests and trees outside forests to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including by strengthening cooperation, coordination, coherence, synergies and political commitment and actions at all levels.

14. The strategic plan includes a vision for forests in 2030 as a world in which all types of forests and trees outside forests are sustainably managed, contribute to sustainable development and provide economic, social, environmental and cultural benefits for present and future generations.

A. Global forest goals and their associated targets

15. The global forest goals and targets to be attained by 2030 represent the aspiration and ambition of the strategic plan. The goals and targets build upon existing international forest-related instruments, processes, commitments and goals, including in particular the forest-related aspects of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the global objectives on forests of the United Nations forest instrument.

16. These goals and targets apply to all types of forests and cover a wide range of thematic areas that require particular actions and measures, including those actions contained in the United Nations forest instrument.[4]

17. The Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network of the Forum plays an important role in facilitating access by countries to resources to implement the strategic plan and achieve its global forest goals and targets. Information on the activities of the Network is detailed in the note by the Secretariat on means of implementation for sustainable forest management.[5]

18. The Forum is the responsible intergovernmental body for the follow-up to and review of implementation of the strategic plan and the achievement of its global forest goals and targets. To that end, the Forum has included a standing agenda item on the implementation of the strategic plan at each session of the Forum from 2017-2020, taking into account the interplay between technical discussion and exchange of experiences, as well as policy dialogue, on thematic and operational priorities, priority actions and resource needs.

19. The Forum agreed to assess progress in the implementation of the strategic plan and the achievement of the global forest goals and targets at its sessions in 2024 and 2030, respectively. This assessment will be based on internationally agreed indicators, taking into account voluntary national reporting to the Forum and inputs received from relevant partners and stakeholders.

20. The proposed cycle and format for national reporting to the Forum is detailed in the report of the Secretary-General on monitoring, assessment and reporting on progress towards implementing the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017-2030, including the United Nations forest instrument and voluntary national contributions.[6]

[4] For a complete list of actions and measures contained in the United Nations forest instrument, see General Assembly resolution 62/98.

[5] E/CN.18/2017/4.

[6] E/CN.18/2017/3.

B. Voluntary national contributions and voluntary announcement thereof

21. In accordance with paragraph 30 of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017-2030, member States may, on a voluntary basis, determine their contributions towards achieving the global forest goals and targets, taking into account their national circumstances, policies, priorities, capacities, levels of development and forest conditions. Member States may include in their voluntary national contributions, as appropriate, national actions and targets related to other international forest-related commitments and goals, such as the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and actions to address climate change under the Paris Agreement adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

22. Voluntary national contributions can be a valuable tool in mainstreaming the strategic plan and creating ownership at the national level, as well as facilitating the assessment and monitoring of progress towards the achievement of the global forest goals. Accordingly, the Forum has included a standing agenda item on voluntary announcement of voluntary national contributions at each session of the Forum as part of its quadrennial programme of work for the period 2017-2020.

23. In accordance with paragraph 32 of the strategic plan, member States may, on a voluntary basis, communicate their progress in implementation of the voluntary national contributions to the Forum at regular intervals as part of their voluntary reporting on the implementation of the strategic plan and the United Nations forest instrument to avoid any additional reporting burden. The proposed cycle and format for national reporting to the Forum, as well as initial views on the possible format of voluntary national contributions, are detailed in the report of the Secretary-General on monitoring, assessment and reporting on progress towards implementing the strategic plan for forests 2017-2030, including the United Nations forest instrument and voluntary national contributions.[7]

C. United Nations system-wide contributions to the implementation of the global forest goals and targets

24. The strategic plan serves as a reference for the forest-related work of the United Nations system to achieve its global forest goals and targets. In this context, the use of the strategic plan should be promoted within the United Nations system, including through inter-agency coordination mechanisms and, where appropriate, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination.

25. Member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, and in particular the secretariats of the Rio conventions,[8] have an important role to play in the implementation of the strategic plan and are encouraged to integrate the relevant global forest goals and targets into their forest-related plans and programmes, where appropriate and consistent with their mandates. In addition to the organizations that are represented in the Partnership, a number of other United Nations bodies, organizations and specialized agencies address issues that are relevant to forests, such as eradication of poverty in its all forms, gender equality and the empowerment of women, labour standards, small and medium-sized enterprises, scientific and technical cooperation, disaster risk reduction, ecotourism and issues

[7] Ibid.

[8] The Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

related to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. These bodies, organizations and specialized agencies, within the scope of their mandates, are invited to use the strategic plan as a reference with a view to building synergies between the global forest goals and targets of the strategic plan and their respective policies and programmes, including their contributions to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

26. The Forum has included a standing agenda item on United Nations system-wide contributions to the implementation of the strategic plan global forest goals and targets at each of its sessions as part of the quadrennial programme of work for the period 2017-2020. Accordingly, the United Nations bodies, organizations and specialized agencies, in particular the secretariats of the Rio conventions, may wish and are encouraged to provide information on their contributions to the implementation of the strategic plan and the achievement of its global forest goals and targets at the Forum sessions.

IV. Thematic and operational priorities for the period 2017-2018

27. In accordance with paragraph 70 of the strategic plan, the Forum, as a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council, should contribute to the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, and highlight the contribution of forests to the Goals under review at the annual sessions of the high-level political forum on sustainable development. Accordingly, the Forum has included a standing agenda item on consideration of thematic and operational priorities, including priority actions and resource needs for the biennium, taking into account the review cycle of the high-level political forum on sustainable development during the biennium and the theme of the International Day of Forests, at each session of the Forum as part of the quadrennial programme of work for the period 2017-2020. In this regard, the sessions in 2017 and 2018 offer a unique opportunity for the Forum to maximize the linkages between its work and contributions to the implementation of the strategic plan and to the implementation, follow-up to and review of the forest-related aspects of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including its forest-related Sustainable Development Goals and targets.

A. High-level political forum on sustainable development

28. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 70/1, thematic reviews of progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, including cross-cutting issues, take place at the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened every year under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council and every four years under the auspices of the General Assembly. These reviews are supported by inputs from the functional commissions of the Council and other intergovernmental bodies and forums.

Contribution of the Forum to the 2017 meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development

29. In 2017, the theme of the high-level political forum on sustainable development is "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing

world". Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 3, 5, 9 and 14 will be reviewed in depth, along with the Sustainable Development Goal 17.[9]

30. In accordance with the quadrennial programme of work, the Forum, at its twelfth session, may wish to consider its contribution to the 2017 meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development. In preparing its contribution, the Forum could consider the following areas from the template for inputs to the 2017 high-level political forum,[10] which include: (a) assessment of the situation regarding the principle of "ensuring that no one is left behind" at the global level; (b) identification of gaps, areas requiring urgent attention, risks and challenges; (c) valuable lessons learned with regard to eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity; (d) emerging issues likely to affect the realization of poverty eradication and the achievement of prosperity; (e) areas in which political guidance is required; and (f) policy recommendations on ways to accelerate progress in poverty eradication.

31. To facilitate discussions at the twelfth session of the Forum, the annex to the present note includes initial information on some forest contributions to the 2017 theme of the high-level political forum on sustainable development and the Sustainable Development Goals under review at the 2017 meeting of the high-level political forum (see annex below). In preparing this initial information, the Forum secretariat solicited and benefited from the views of a number of member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests.[11]

Contribution of the Forum to the 2018 meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development

32. In 2018, the theme of the high-level political forum on sustainable development will be "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies". Sustainable Development Goals 6, 7, 11, 12 and 15[12] will be reviewed in depth, along with the Sustainable Development Goal 17.

33. In view of the importance of forest goods and services to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals to be reviewed in depth at the 2018 meeting of the

[9] Sustainable Development Goal 1: "End poverty in all its forms everywhere"; Sustainable Development Goal 2: "End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture"; Sustainable Development Goal 3: "Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages"; Sustainable Development Goal 5: "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls"; Sustainable Development Goal 9: "Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation"; Sustainable Development Goal 14: "Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development"; and Sustainable Development Goal 17: "Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development".

[10] The President of the Council, in his letter dated 27 September 2016, invited the Chair of the Bureau of the twelfth session of the Forum to provide substantive inputs to the 2017 meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development showcasing the Forum's contribution towards the 2030 Agenda in general and particularly for the Sustainable Development Goals and respective targets that were most relevant to the mandate of the Forum. In this regard, the Forum's contribution may be transmitted by the Chair to the President of the Council in response to his invitation.

[11] All submitted survey responses are available on the Forum website at www.un.org/esa/forests/collaborative-partnership-on-forests.

[12] Sustainable Development Goal 6: "Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all"; Sustainable Development Goal 7: "Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all"; Sustainable Development Goal 11: "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable"; Sustainable Development Goal 12: "Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns"; Sustainable Development Goal 15: "Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss".

high-level political forum on sustainable development, including Sustainable Development Goal 15, which prominently features forests, it is critical to ensure that a full range of benefits and contributions of forests are taken into account in the review of progress by the high-level political forum on sustainable development. In this context, the Forum may wish to consider inviting member States and other relevant stakeholders to submit their views on the contributions of forests to the progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals 6, 7, 11, 12, 15 and 17, with a view to preparing its contribution to the 2018 meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

B. International Day of Forests

34. The General Assembly, in its resolution 67/200, decided to proclaim 21 March of each year the International Day of Forests in order to celebrate and raise awareness of the importance of all types of forests and of trees outside forests.

35. The Forum secretariat collaborates with other members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to propose a central theme for the annual celebration of the International Day of Forests. The themes are intended to highlight the wide range of contributions forests make to global sustainable development, including implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. A central theme for the global observance also helps with regard to coordinating communications by the forest community, while recognizing that countries and organizations may tailor the theme to their own priority areas. In 2016, the proposed theme was "forests and water", which also served to highlight the interlinkages between Sustainable Development Goals 6 and 15. In 2017, the proposed theme was "forests and energy", which served to highlight the interlinkages between Goals 7 and 15. The Forum secretariat, in collaboration with other members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, is currently working to develop proposed themes for the 2018 and 2019 International Day of Forests, taking into consideration the relevant themes of the high-level political forum on sustainable development in those years.

Annex

Initial information on the contributions of forests to the 2017 theme of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world", and Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 3, 5, 9 and 14

Forests contribute to eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world

1. Forests cover 30 per cent of the Earth's land area, or nearly 4 billion hectares (ha), and are essential to human well-being, sustainable development and the health of the planet. An estimated 1.6 billion people, 25 per cent of the global population, depend on forests for subsistence, livelihood, employment and income generation.[a]

2. Forests provide essential ecosystem services, such as timber, food, fuel, fodder, non-wood products and shelter, as well as contribute to soil and water conservation and clean air. Forests prevent land degradation and desertification, and reduce the risk of floods, landslides and avalanches, droughts, dust storms and sandstorms and other natural disasters. Forests are home to an estimated 80 per cent of all terrestrial species. Forests contribute substantially to climate change mitigation and adaptation and in conserving biodiversity.[b]

3. By fulfilling fundamental needs, forests sustain the livelihoods of poor and non-poor rural households and provide them with income-generating and employment opportunities in the formal and informal sectors to further improve their livelihoods.

4. Forests provide rural households with food and nutritional security, energy security, medicinal plants, shelter and furnishings. For the rural poor, forests and trees outside forests provide the opportunity for direct consumption and barter of non-wood forest products, particularly for food and fuel, thereby providing pathways out of poverty.

5. Forests also contribute to meeting the growing demand for food, energy, water and environmental services, thereby sustaining and promoting human well-being. Approximately three quarters of fresh water used by household, agriculture and industrial sectors derive from forested catchments.[c]

6. Over 2 billion people in rural and urban areas rely on fuelwood for their energy needs, with regions with the highest incidence of poverty, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, being the most dependent on fuelwood. Wood constitutes the primary source of energy for cooking and heating in many developing countries, where nearly 90 per cent of fuelwood and charcoal is consumed.[d]

7. In their voluntary national reports to the tenth session (E/CN.18/2013/2) and eleventh session (E/CN.18/2015/3) of the Forum, countries highlighted how forests and sustainable forest management contribute to poverty reduction. In particular,

---

[a] E/2017/10-E/CN.18/SS/2017/2, para. 5.

[b] Ibid., para. 6.

[c] Andreas Fischlin and others, "Ecosystems, their properties, goods, and services", in *Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*, contribution of Working Group II to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2007).

[d] Uma Lele and others, "Changing roles of forests and their cross-sectoral linkages in the course of economic development", background paper prepared for the United Nations Forum on Forests (2013).

many countries indicated high-value ratings (for example, "significant" and/or "crucial") to the role and contribution of forests and sustainable forest management to poverty reduction. Forests are often referred to as "safety nets" for the rural poor, because they provide fuelwood and a variety of non-wood forest products.

8. Employment opportunities provided by forests were equally emphasized by countries in their national reports. Opportunities in forestry-based jobs, as well as the direct contribution of forests to food security, were considered critical to the livelihoods of the rural poor. The decentralized nature of the forest sector was highlighted, referring to the fact that for communities living in or on fringes of forests, often in remote areas, forests provided the only possible source of employment, shelter, food and medicine.

9. The critical cross-sectoral connections between the sustainability of natural resources and eradication of poverty and hunger were also highlighted by countries. Recognition was given to agroforestry systems, which, in rural communities, are contributing to the improvement of food security. Countries emphasized the critical role of forests in safeguarding high-quality water resources for fundamental domestic use, including cooking and drinking, in rural areas. The grazing capacity provided by forest lands was also mentioned. Roads and social infrastructure systems (for example, clinics, health facilities and schools) supported by forest companies were also mentioned.

Forests contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 3, 5, 9 and 14

10. Forests contribute directly to the food and nutritional security of billions of people worldwide through their consumption, barter and sale of food, wood fuel and medicines derived from forests. Many rural communities rely on food from forests, such as honey, fruits, mushrooms, nuts, seeds, insects and wild animals.

11. Forests protect watersheds, regulate the water cycle, preserve soils and stabilize climate, thereby playing a key role in achieving sustainable agriculture. Agroforestry and other mixed systems of forests and agriculture, including trees outside forests, constitute a crucial part of the sustainable agriculture required to meet the growing need for food and to eradicate poverty.

12. Forests provide a wide variety of plants and animals, including microbes, with medicinal benefits, providing health benefits to many rural poor communities that do not have access to formal health-care services. The contribution of forests to human well-being is increasingly being recognized by health experts and institutions. It is estimated by the World Health Organization that up to 80 per cent of the population in some regions is dependent on medicines that derive from forests as their primary form of health care. In addition to medicinal value, forests also provide physical and mental health benefits. Researchers have reported the positive links between time spent in forests and better focus and recovery from fatigue, as well as improvements in mood and stress levels.[c]

13. Rural women in the developing world rely on forests for food and fuelwood, as they generally have the responsibility of meeting household dietary and energy needs. In some countries, family forestry is gaining popularity for cash income generation in rural areas and women are active partners in this regard. Family forestry practices, in which women are at the forefront, are replacing agricultural crops with forestry crops to restore soil fertility and provide protection from disease and pest infestations. In

[c] Eeva Karjalainen and others, "Promoting human health through forests: overview and major challenges", *Environmental Health and Preventive Medicine*, vol. 15, No. 1 (2010).

situations in which forest resources become scarce, women play a vital role in maintaining and improving standards in rural households. Equal rights and access to forest and tree resources are indispensable for the livelihoods of women, as the depletion of, and lack of access to, forest resources disproportionately increases the burden on them. Furthermore, the role of women in the forestry sector and their contributions to poverty alleviation continue to be underacknowledged.

14. Forests provide substantial employment opportunities in the formal and informal forest sectors, including small and medium-sized forest enterprises. Globally, the formal forest sector employs 13.2 million people, while an additional 41 million are employed in the informal forest sector.[f] It is estimated that small and medium-sized forest enterprises constitute 80 to 90 per cent of all forestry enterprises and over 50 per cent of forest sector employment in many countries.[g]

15. Many coastal communities use coastal forests, including mangroves and other tidal forests, as a vital source of their livelihoods and economic activities. These forests provide a wide range of wood and non-wood forest products, as well as fishing grounds and nurseries for aquatic species; they also mitigate and shield coastal areas from the impact of extreme weather and climatic events.[h]

Some gaps, risks and challenges

16. Approximately 20 per cent of the Earth's forests have been lost since 1700,[i] and the loss and degradation of forests continues in many regions, particularly in the tropical domain, mainly as a result of competing demands for other land uses. The proportion of forests in global land area decreased by 1.0 per cent, from 31.6 per cent, or 4,128 million ha, in 1990 to 30.6 per cent, or 3,999 million ha, in 2015.[j]

17. While the annual rate of net forest loss has significantly decelerated (from 0.18 per cent in the 1990s to 0.08 per cent between 2010 and 2015), largely owing to the increased area of planted forests, natural forests continue to shrink, particularly in the tropics, decreasing by a net area of 6.5 million ha per year.[j]

18. The use of unsustainably harvested fuelwood, which often occurs in areas with the highest incidence of poverty, particularly in Africa and Asia, while providing an essential service, continues to be a challenge and has negative health, economic and environmental effects. For instance, an estimated 1.3 million people, particularly women and children, suffer and die prematurely from exposure to air pollution caused by the indoor use of biomass energy.[k]

19. The provision of adequate and sustained financing is imperative to sustainably manage forests and to ensure the continued supply of forest products and services for

[f] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *State of the World's Forests 2014* (Rome, 2014).

[g] *A Cut for the Poor. Proceedings of the International Conference on Managing Forests for Poverty Reduction: Capturing Opportunities in Forest Harvesting and Wood Processing for the Benefit of the Poor*, Robert Oberndorf and others, eds. (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and Regional Community Forestry Training Center for Asia and the Pacific, 2007).

[h] Hanneke Van Lavieren and others, *Securing the Future of Mangroves* (United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health, 2012).

[i] Kees Klein Goldewijk and Navin Ramankutty, "Land use changes during the past 300 Years", *Encyclopedia of Land Use, Land Cover and Soil Sciences* (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and Eolss Publishers, 2009).

[j] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *Global Forest Resources Assessment 2015* (Rome, 2016).

[k] International Energy Agency, *World Energy Outlook 2006* (Paris, 2006).

human well-being and the planet. A large gap exists between financing needs for sustainable forest management (estimated at between $70 and $160 billion a year),[l] and current financing flows at all levels, including public, domestic and international financing. Addressing this gap is critical to effectively tackle the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation and achieve sustainable forest management.

20. The current financing landscape mainly addresses limited aspects related to forests, focusing on their roles in carbon sequestration and biodiversity conservation rather than on sustainable forest management as a whole. Current funding schemes are therefore intended for countries with high forest cover and high rates of deforestation, disproportionately and negatively affecting some of the most vulnerable countries and populations, including countries with lower rates of deforestation, countries with low forest cover, and small island developing States.

21. The fragmented forest financing landscape reflects the existing fragmentation and lack of policy coherence and coordination with regard to how forests, water, food and agriculture and other land and natural resources are used at the international and national levels. It is imperative for diverse international, regional and national organizations to join forces to address sustainable land use and natural resource priorities in an integrated and coherent manner.

22. At the national level, it is essential to undertake forest-related policies that improve the lives of the most vulnerable and the poorest, including through, among other things, land tenure and ownership policies that benefit local communities and indigenous peoples, as well as policies and measures to increase the access of local communities and small forest-based enterprises to forest financing.

23. In addition to policy measures to ensure that no one is left behind, there remains a pressing need to improve public accounting systems to recognize and reflect the full values and benefits of forest goods and services in policymaking processes, as their ecosystem services, such as biodiversity and soil conservation, carbon sequestration and water purification, continue to be undervalued. Such improvement could help spur recognition of the long-term nature of investments in forests and incentivize public funding for forests.

24. Several member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests highlighted that significant data gaps and challenges continue to exist in measuring and taking into account the full contribution of forests to society and the planet in land-use decisions. Most national forest inventories focus on biophysical data. Indicators and methodologies are missing and data on the nexus between forests and poverty, hunger and food security remain anecdotal and scattered.

Selected emerging issues

25. From 1970 to 2010, the global population nearly doubled, from 3.7 billion to 6.9 billion people, and the size of the global economy tripled from $15.4 trillion to $51.7 trillion. Current projections indicate that the global population may reach 8.5 billion in 2030 and 9.7 billion in 2050, with much of this increase occurring in developing countries.[m] This population and economic growth, combined with rising per capita income in many countries, continues to take its toll on the world's forests.

[l] Advisory Group on Finance of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, "2012 study on forest financing" (2012), available from www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/AGF_Study_July_2012.pdf.

[m] United Nations, *2015 World Population Prospects* (New York, 2015).

26. Despite recent trends of persistent weak demand in developed economies and falling commodity prices, the global economy and trade volumes continue to grow, albeit at lower rates, thus continuing to drive the demand for agricultural and forest products, and compounding the pressure on the existing production capacity of natural resources.

27. In parallel to the population growth, urbanization continues to increase in all regions, with 54 per cent of the world's population now residing in urban areas. This urbanization trend, which includes migration from rural to urban areas, is expected to continue and accelerate, particularly in Africa and Asia, and is projected to reach 66 per cent by 2050.[n]

28. A number of studies demonstrate links between urbanization, population and income growth, increased demand for food, fibre, energy and water, and changing consumption patterns and lifestyles. Urban populations consume more than two thirds of the world's energy, account for more than 70 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions, and consume crops and products that are of higher value and that require greater consumption of water, including livestock, fisheries, fruits and vegetables.[o]

29. Available data indicate that global temperatures in 2016 were approximately 1.2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, surpassing the record-breaking temperatures in 2015 and putting global efforts off track to hold the increase in the global average temperature to below 2 degrees Celsius.[p]

30. Forests constitute vital sinks and sources of carbon dioxide, absorbing and storing 296 gigatons of carbon in above- and below-ground biomass.[q] The carbon stocks in forest biomass continue to be lost mainly as a result of conversion of forests to other land uses, in particular agriculture.

31. Extreme weather and climate-related events, such as droughts, storms, floods and wildfires, as well as heat waves and cold spells, have significant effects on forests, including on their biological diversity, health and vitality and productive and protective functions. These compounding disturbances in turn negatively affect forest-related socioeconomic activities, thereby detrimentally affecting the livelihoods of the most vulnerable, including forest-dependent people and communities.

32. Efforts to tackle poverty, deforestation and forest degradation need to be addressed together to combat climate change since forest-dependent people and communities, as well as forest-based industries, depend on activities that are inseparably interlinked to climate. There is a pressing need to support forest-dependent people and communities in adapting to climate change, while mitigating its effects through sustainable forest management, including protection, restoration, afforestation and reforestation, and increase efforts to prevent forest degradation.

---

[n] United Nations, *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2014 Revision* (New York, 2015).

[o] United Nations Human Settlements Programme, *Global Report on Human Settlements 2011: Cities and Climate Change* (Nairobi, 2011); and International Energy Agency (IEA), *World Energy Outlook 2008* (Paris, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and IEA, 2008).

[p] World Meteorological Organization, provisional statement on the status of the global climate in 2016, available from https://ane4bf-datap1.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/wmocms/s3fs-public/2016_WMO_Statement_on_the_Status_of_the_Global_Climate-14-11-16-ver2.pdf?ZmlaubFZknHEGDBpyxTBpTcrNotiDpDo.

[q] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *Global Forest Resources Assessment 2015* (Rome, 2016).

Selected priorities for action to enhance the contributions of forests to poverty eradication

33. In view of the wide-ranging benefits and contributions of forest goods and services, sustainable forest management and its implementation play an important role in accelerating the eradication of poverty while sustaining economic prosperity and conserving natural resources.

34. Despite the importance of sustainable forest management to sustainable development and poverty eradication, many countries continue to experience difficulties in making progress towards sustainable management of all types of forests and trees outside forests largely owing to their limited capacities and resource availability, as well as inadequate enabling environments.

35. A fragmented forest financing landscape and insufficient funding for the implementation of sustainable forest management continue to pose a significant challenge at all levels. There is no single solution that can address the challenge, as it requires a collaborative approach and a mixture of measures by all member States; international, regional and national organizations; major groups; and other stakeholders, including the private sector, and philanthropic organizations and foundations.

36. There continues to be a need to establish a solid monitoring framework to address data gaps, especially in the area of the socioeconomic aspects of forests. Systematic data are needed to create a sufficient evidence base and demonstrate the full contribution of forests to poverty and hunger eradication, as well as to livelihoods.

37. By the same token, it is also necessary to further improve methodologies to better monitor, assess and value forest services beyond the production of timber. Forests can compete with other land uses only if their full value is taken into account in development planning.

38. Coherent actions at all levels to implement sustainable forest management are critical, as highlighted by some members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests in their survey responses.[1] In this regard, the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017-2030 and its global forest goals and targets offer an unprecedented opportunity to guide strengthened action by all actors at all levels to safeguard forests and their multiple values and benefits and achieve sustainable forest management.

[1] All submitted survey responses are available on the Forum website from www.un.org/esa/forests/collaborative-partnership-on-forests.